

# If ethnic diversity is good, should we use it to judge schools?

- Diversity is good. This is a major premise many people accept in today's America. As the former principal of a school where 25% of the students were refugees from the world's war zones and the poverty level was 90%, I appreciate diverse cultures and the people who represent them. The federal No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB), however, divides the people of the planet Earth into five categories that are somewhat arbitrary and contain people who don't have a lot in common. Furthermore, NCLB makes schools accountable for each group. The next slide lists the approved groups. This is followed by pictures where you have to guess if the people are in the same NCLB group or not. See how well you can do, then consider my final thoughts.

- Brought to you by Douglas W. Green, EdD

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- NCLB recognizes these five ethnic groups that schools must use.
  - American Indian/Alaskan Native
  - Black (not Hispanic origin)
  - Asian/Pacific Islander
  - Hispanic
  - White (not Hispanic origin).



# Same Group or Different Group?



Robinson Cano - 2nd Base  
New York Yankees



Wyclef Jean  
Entertainer

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# Different Group



While they look like they should be from the same group, and are both from the island Columbus called Hispaniola, Cano is a Dominican and therefore an Hispanic. Jean is a Haitian and is black for NCLB purposes.

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# Same Group or Different Group?



A star from the Pakistani  
cricket team



Mahmoud Ahmadinejad  
President of Iran

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# Different Group



While they may look somewhat alike and their countries have a common border, NCLB draws the line between Asia and caucasian lands between Pakistan and Afghanistan/Iran. This makes the cricket player an Asian, while Ahmadinejad is white like me. (As a Swedish American, I am really white.)

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# Same Group or Different Group?



Maria Sharapova  
Tennis Star



Yao Ming  
Basketball Star

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# It may be your call if you are a principal.



Maria Sharapova was born in Siberia. This would make her an Asian if you extend the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan straight North. Also, people my age learned that Asia started East of the Urial Mountains. Yao Ming is from China, which by anyone's estimation is in Asia. If Maria's dad felt like she was from Asia, they would be in the same group. Also in the Asian group is the guy from Pakistan, who doesn't look much like Yao either.

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# Same Group or Different Group?



Derek Jeter  
Shortstop, NY Yankees



Barak Obama  
Leader of the Free World

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# It may be your call if you are a principal.



Derek Jeter and Barack Obama both have white mothers and black fathers. Thanks to the shuffling of genetic material, Jeter might pass for white, while Obama probably couldn't. For NCLB purposes, they would end up in whichever group their parents put them in when they entered school. If the parents elected not to check any box, the principal would have to decide. They could end up in the same group, or not.

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# Same Group or Different Group?



Robinson Cano - 2nd Base  
New York Yankees



Camilo Villegas  
Golfer

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# Same Group



Cano is a Dominican and Camilo Villegas is from Columbia. As they are both native Spanish speakers, they are Hispanics according to NCLB. Since they are both Hispanic, we have a black guy who isn't black and a white guy who isn't white. Thanks NCLB.

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# Same Group or Different Group?



Ernie Els  
Golfer



Nouredine Morceli  
Track Star



Nelson Mandela  
Former President

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# Same Group or Different Group?



Ernie Els is a South African as is Nelson Mandela. Ernie lives in the United States. Does this make him an African American? Mandela would certainly be considered an African American if he moved here. Nouredine Morceli is a track star from Algeria, who is also a native African. If he moved here he would think he was an African American, but he is a white guy by NCLB standards as are all other Arabs. He would be in the same group as Els, while Mandela would most likely check the black box.

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# Same Group or Different Group?



American Indian



Guatemalan Indian

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## Probably Different Group?



They are both descended from the people who made their way across the land bridge from Asia at least 12,000 years ago. That should put them both in the native American group. The girl from Guatemala, however, may speak Spanish thanks to the conquistadors, and thus would probably be considered Hispanic

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# So where does this leave us?

I hope that my little quiz shows some of the flaws in the notion of trying to force the world's population into five arbitrary groups and then making schools responsible for the progress of each group. In my view, and in the view of many others, educational inequality is all about poverty and not anything else. To think otherwise you need to believe that intelligence varies from one group to another. If your school is lucky enough to have a diverse population, then the staff should make the most of it. As educators, we should do what we can to help poor kids get a better education, and schools should be held accountable. In addition to offering high quality lessons and leveraging students' passion, I think this means longer school days and longer school years. Both get poor kids out of their impoverished environments for longer periods of time. Will congress hear and get this message? Please pass this on if you agree.

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